

Jorge Rodríguez Beruff and José L. Bolívar Fresneda, eds. 2015. *Island at War. Puerto Rico in the Crucible of the Second World War*. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi. 272 pp. ISBN: 978-1-62846-164-0s.

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The fear of a war conflict reaching the shores of the Caribbean, especially in Puerto Rico, became an imminent threat on the eve of the Second World War when hundreds of commercial ships and vessels were sunk by Nazi submarines in the region. The period just before the war reached its peak turmoil helped reshape perceptions about the geostrategic role that the island and the region played in the military defense of the allied forces interests in the Western hemisphere.

Island at War is a book that helps to fill the gap in Caribbean historical and social sciences studies about this era and its impacts on our contemporary world. Its ten essays are not organized by any particular logic. Four of the essays are written or co-written by the editors. The authors are scholars with backgrounds in Sociology, History, Journalism, Literature and Communications. All contribute to the understanding of the impact of militarism and the arrival of industrial development policies that brought accelerated modernization processes of change.

In 1945, right after the end of the war, Puerto Rico's political system and economy was radically transformed and the island served as a model for new and emergent countries. The new reality radically shifted the island's economy from agriculture to high-level industrialization. The political system that was established later by Congress in 1952 was favored by the conditions imposed by this context. As the editors point out, all Caribbean societies were involved in the war in different ways and Puerto Rico was key in US strategic necessities. The continental and insular governments focused on maintaining the political and economic "stability" that could better suit their interests. Currently in a full development crisis, this small nation's history would be very difficult to grasp without and understanding of the prewar and war years.

In the first chapter, *Rediscovering Puerto Rico and the Caribbean: US Strategic Debate and War Planning on the Eve of the Second World War*, Rodríguez Beruff addresses the rediscovery of the Caribbean as a region of highly significant value to military strategic planning and the political transitions that took place in Puerto Rico during the period of 1938 to 1941. He demonstrates how the fear of a fascist insurrection in

conjunction with military and private interests stimulated the creation of new war plans that were marketed as programs of economic development. He also points out how these debates contributed to the expansion of US political and cultural influence with the aim of transforming the region into an “American Mediterranean.” In *War and Political Transition in Puerto Rico, 1939-1940*, the same author dives into the dilemma that the Roosevelt administration faced with the repressive decade-long governorship of Blanton Winship and the need of redefining Washington’s approach to politics in the island. He highlights how the colonial problems and questions of Puerto Rico were strategically avoided. Also, how the rising Popular Democratic Party and its president Luis Muñoz Marín went from not being considered serious political contenders to being the leaders of the new reformist policies for over two decades after the war.

In *Puerto Rico: Headquarters of the Caribbean Sea Frontier 1940-1945*, Grenadian scholar Fitzroy André Baptiste exemplifies the need for political stability, skill training and the maintenance of a healthy population in the Caribbean islands, especially Puerto Rico, if the military projects were to succeed. At one point Puerto Rico was proposed as the region’s outpost for the programs for economic and technical development that would only “take off” after the beginning of the Cold War era.

All chapters cover a balanced contextualization of the issues that were going on in the island, the region and internationally, and establish important correlations. In *The Wartime Quartet: Muñoz Marín, Tugwell, Ickes and FDR*, Michael Janeway traces the relationships of four key political figures who together established the principles for modernization projects and a technocratic administration and planning of government. In *The War Economy of Puerto Rico 1939-1945*, José L. Bolívar Fresneda takes into account the economic history of the island from the perspective of the consequences of war. He focuses on infrastructure and military investments, the tax revenue accrued from rum sales and the salaries repatriated by Puerto Rican soldiers which he argues were the main sources of income of the government during that time. It also points to the expansion of the public and private banking sector and its relation to the major institutional changes that were taking place.

Those major investments increased after Germany’s Operation Neuland started using U-boats ordered to “sink as much enemy shipping as quickly as possible” as Ligia T. Domenech’s *The German Blockade of the Caribbean in 1942 and its Effects in Puerto Rico* points out. She describes the atmosphere of fear the islanders lived through that year and how military stations, practices and infrastructure were quickly being built and planned. The food scarcity problem that followed was not met with plans to strengthen food production independence but with pleas for an increase in the importation of products. The discourse claimed that

Puerto Ricans had been long divorced from self-production. Furthermore, these issues strengthened US influence and military presence in the entire region.

One of the most meaningful events was the transfer to the US Navy of over 54,000 or the 41% of land in the island municipality of Vieques for military exercises as exposed by César J. Ayala Casás and Bolívar Fresneda in *Vieques: The Impact of the Second World War*. While the sugarcane industry forcefully disappeared, the industrialization benefits did not reach the island due to its main military objectives. Up until the beginning of this century, Vieques has suffered terrible economic, political, environmental and human conflicts that are traceable back to the Second World War period.

These military establishments aided in the active collaboration of the Puerto Rican government to participate in regional projects that ensured the dominance of US and British interests. In one of the most well rounded chapters *The Anglo-American Caribbean Commission: A Socioeconomic Strategy Designed for Military Security 1942-1946*, Mayra Rosado Urrutia presents how the creation of economic opportunities and the illusion of public participation were created to satisfy the need of civil stabilization at the conjecture of war. She points out how regional cooperation initiatives emerged only when security and hegemony were at stake.

A key factor in the geopolitical game is presented in Luis Rosario Albert, *Geopolitics and Telecommunications Policy in Puerto Rico: ITT and the Porto Rico Telephone Company, 1942-1948* where he shows how the influence, expansion and accelerated development of the US communications industry allowed the creation of one of the first multinational companies in the world. The battlefield for the control of communications was an odd one, especially when the industry maintained relationships with the Axis Powers during all of the war and the author thoroughly examines its domestic and international links.

The book ends with Rafael Chabrán's personal account *What Did You Do in the War, Daddy? The Story of a Puerto Rican in the Second World War and Korea: Captain Harry Chabrán Acevedo, 1925-1986*, a story of how war transformed the lives of many families in the island, through the perspective of a Puerto Rican lieutenant.

In sum, this work by multiple authors has very interesting perspectives and facts that shed light on a mostly dark period in Puerto Rican and Caribbean regional history. It encourages readers, especially new researchers or graduate students to think of the past and its impacts on the present and to further studies on the time period that could have a more comparative, regional outlook.

Rafael Ocasio. 2012. *Afro-Cuban Costumbrismo: From Plantation to the Slums*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. 230 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8130-4164-3.

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The book's front cover, a reproduction of the nineteenth-century French painter and engraver Frédéric Mialhe's *Fiesta de reyes*, gets it right. By that I mean—and this becomes incandescently clear on finishing reading Rafael Ocasio's 2012 study, *Afro-Cuban Costumbrismo: From Plantation to the Slums*, his fourth book—when you consider that the cover designer chose not to include Mialhe's engraving in its entirety. Instead, the cover centers on two dancing barefoot *ngangas* (healers, holy men), their bodies clothed in ceremonial African garb, one looking face down and shaking a lavish peacock headdress, the other staring straight at you and donning a horned crown of fiery red plumes; yet both (along with the bongo beating away) conducting a group of chanting *santeros* and *santeras* in the background. Dressed solely in white, the men in open loose shirts exposing their muscular chests, and the women in elaborate skirts almost touching the ground but tight around the waist, so that the skirts balloon to the rhythm of gyrating hips, reveals a *fiesta* like no other. The celebrants stomp their feet, with arms and hands raised in a show of solidarity and respect to the ancestral spirits.

A little barking dog in the lower left-hand corner also figures on the cover, but the *calesero*, the liveried black stagecoach driver, the ““uppity Black”” (Ocasio 11), *respectable* and holding a cane, decked out in top hat and swallow-tail coat, doesn't. Why? Well, for one, the *calesero* strikes a static pose, two-dimensional like a Russian Orthodox Church icon of the Virgin and Divine Child amidst the tremendous movement of the festivity, the *bembe* Ocasio himself affectionately alludes to in his preface of dancing chanting holy men and stomping singing *santeros* and *santeras* (xvi). Unlike the *congero*, who too is absent from the cover, but who nonetheless makes his presence felt as all the worshippers swing and sway to the beating of his intense drumming—skin against skin—the *calesero*'s “civilized” albeit colonized and blunt stamp on the whole scene serves as a figurative contrapuntal wall the dancers push off of, in an attempt to prove that, though of African ancestry, the stagecoach driver is indeed their counterpart. And Ocasio's book dexterously unravels these contrapuntal intricacies and how these go about developing an Afro-Cuban identity soon to evolve into a Cuban nationalist spirit.

The detail and rigor with which Ocasio maps the discursive history of nineteenth-century *Costumbrista* writing hinges on a paradox, one that he uses as an exegetical conceit. To better explain, I turn to Ocasio and what he proposes towards the closing of *Costumbrismo*: “[i]n spite of the individual *Costumbrista* writer’s biases [and these often invariably negative, derogatory, and downright racist] about Black Creole cultures, their essays exhibit numerous literary figures as examples of urban Black traditions” (205). Then, after listing some of those figures like “the mulatos finos, the female Black vendor, the snappy-dresser coach driver, and the colorful and dangerous Black thug,” he concludes: “[a]s illustrated in their *counterparts* in today’s multiracial and multinational societies, these Black types reveal elements of the dynamics behind race relations and the impact of racial discrimination on behavioral patterns” (207, emphasis added). That very “impact of racial discrimination on behavioral patterns,” such as *Costumbrista* writers like Anselmo Suárez y Romero, Cirilo Villaverde and Miguel Tacón either overlooking the fact people of African culture and ancestry are endowed with great spiritual mettle and possess a history the world could learn from, and thus portray them prejudicially in their articles, or simply maliciously degrading them in otherwise racist diatribes, stating they are subhuman, could be “opinions” more sensible, compassionate twenty-first century minds certainly won’t agree with.

The point is, and this is what Ocasio continually signposts throughout *Costumbrismo*, in an elegant, clear, and well-documented style even the most diligent scholars would envy, that *Costumbrista* writers were the first to depict Black Creole culture to a mainstream audience, in a literature geared towards satisfying the needs of a consumer society. Subsuming, and subsumed by, what is inextricably Cuban, Afro-Cuban culture, on being represented through personages like *el negrito cate-drático*, *el cimarrón*, *los mataperros*, *el curro*, *la bruja*, and *el pregonero*, “shadow characters” just to name a few (Ocasio 59), becomes the catalyst prompting a unique yet multifaceted Cuban national spirit. Ocasio goes beyond merely saying that all these people lumped together on an island qualifies as syncretism, but uses the person who he is as a proving ground of sorts, wherein he will explore “the development of hybrid elements of Black cultures in Cuban and, by extension, in Caribbean national identities” (xi). For, he “too struggle[s] to find a middle point between [his] desire to project an image of professionalism acceptable within academia and to enjoy marginal roots as a mulato fino” (xvii).

The book, as a literary architecture and academic work, paradoxically follows a decolonizing structure *à la wa Thiong’o*, in that its intro, five chapters, and conclusion mirror “the Yoruba practice of Santería” in “[t]he siete potencias’ [the Seven African Powers]...formed by ‘Elegguá

[“Introduction: Nineteenth-Century Costumbrista Writers on the Slave Trade and on Black Traditions in Cuba], Orúñla [1. “Cuban Costumbrista Portraits of Slaves in Sugarmills: Essays by Anselmo Suárez y Romero”], Obatalá [2. “Juan Francisco Manzano’s *Autobiografía de un esclavo*: Self-Characterization of an Urban Mulato Fino Slave”], Oggún [3. “Urban Slaves and Freed Blacks: Black Women’s Objectification and Erotic Taboos”], Changó [4. “The Costumbristas’ Views of Manly Black Males: Uppity Blacks and Thugs”], Yemayá [5. “Depictions of the Horrific ‘Unseen’: Cuban Creole Religious Practices”], and Oshún [“Conclusion: Costumbrista Essays on Blacks: Nineteenth-Century Preconceived Notions of Civility”]’ (González-Wippler 268)” (qtd. in Ocasio 176). Excluding, of course, the “Preface: A Mulato Fino in the Twenty-First Century—A Personal Reflection,” serving as a prayer, a sign of respect and humility towards the Orishas and a request to approach, the book burns like a lit candle to the Seven African Powers, the kaleidoscope of colors fading one by one to the end.

By the time the reader arrives to Ocasio’s conclusion, two arguments remain salient in his/her mind: (one) “Racist stands are slow to die” (53); and (two) “Whether because of the secrecy of the Black Creole religious groups...or because Black belief, systems were considered a backward example of the current state of development of Cuban culture struggling with technological advances available on the island because of international investors in the sugarcane market, few *Costumbrista* articles explored Black religious subjects as a central theme” (199). The first I read as Ocasio living vicariously through Juan Francisco Manzano, and the redemptive albeit ethnically/culturally compromising aspects of writing in Manzano’s case, and investigative study in Ocasio’s. On the one hand, Manzano as a *mulato fino* refutes the damaging stereotypical value judgements of the dominating discourse—mainly, that blacks are inferior to whites—by teaching himself how to read and write in Spanish, becoming not only a memoirist but a poet as well (62). And on the other, Manzano giving in and describing himself in racial slurs, thus amplifying the self-hate (79), shows Ocasio fleshing out those “shadow characters,” those “peripheral figures” like Manzano (59, 129), in a manner empathic with the abolitionist cause, but with enough objectivity suggesting that, similar to the dramatic changes Cuba itself is currently undergoing, psychological portraits like Manzano’s are also subject to this notion of “a developing Cubanía” (131). And this ever mutable, ever mutating Cuban-ness equals to, Ocasio appears to be saying, the Cuban National Spirit.

The second I read—feel, really, in my bones—as the “corporeally” absent *congero* of the *Fiesta de reyes* cover. That though he or his bongo are nowhere to be found, the reader turned celebrant of Ocasio’s study

need only look towards the congregation, both pictorial and exegetical, to know that his energy, the sonic vibrations emanating from his drumming, in being purely numinous, possesses the greatest impact in the phenomenological world; a power curing physical and spiritual wounds, uniting sentiments between divided peoples, and informing that no one is as broken or defeated as they think they are, much less for how an oppressor requires them to be. For this reason, “few *Costumbrista* articles explored Black religious subjects as a central theme” (199). *Costumbrista* writers were savvy like that, and Ocasio in a lucid style that is rigorous, but above all patient, dimensions these antagonisms with an exuberance always controlled in sound, levelheaded, and well-reasoned prose. Overall, do yourself a favor, and read this book.

Kumar Mahabir, ed. 2013. *Caribbean Issues in the Indian Diaspora*. New Delhi: Serials Publications. 270 pp. ISBN: 978-81-8387-604-9.

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An Indo-Trinidadian scholar of West Indian topics and the diasporic phenomenon, Kumar Mahabir, has collected a manifold of provocative essays in his most recent book, *Caribbean Issues in the Indian Diaspora*. Said papers resulted from the proceedings of the conferences held at St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies in Trinidad in 2011. The book is very aptly divided into four sections and adequately subtitled according to their converging themes: Emotions in Migration, Assimilation, Plurality of Identities and Social Adaptations and Reproduction. A total of fifteen essays comprise the bulk of the book.

Each essay attempts to fill the gaps of historical value and thus provide answers to what remained unaccounted for regarding the East Indian diasporic movement. Maurits S. Hassankham’s contribution addresses the emotional state of the migrants and those who remained in the motherland. It is common knowledge by now that Indians who migrated did so temporarily to earn sufficient funds in the foreign countries to send back home, but it was generally their heart’s desire to return to India. However, the majority rarely managed to do so. Quite the contrary, many died before they could amass sufficient money to defray

the cost of the ticket back home. What is fresh about Hassankham's "Kahe Gaile Bides—Why Did You Go Overseas? An Introduction in Emotional Aspects of Migration History: A Diaspora Perspective" is the emotional state of those left behind and the migrant himself. The author addresses several questions: Why did they leave without their loved ones' knowledge? Was their decision to leave based on deception? Were they in fact misled or forced to leave? Testimonial accounts provide the answers to some of these queries. The first informant, Totaram Sanadhya, an educated Brahmin, arrived to Fiji in 1893 as an indentured servant. He claimed to have been deceived by a recruiter. Following the conversation with this stranger, he soon found himself agreeing to migrate against his will. It was a spur-of-the-moment occurrence that deprived him of bidding farewell to relatives. Fortunately, this informant returned back to India after 21 years abroad. Informant 2, Rahman Khan, a school teacher in India, was likewise deceived into joining two recruiters. Although Khan admits consent to work aboard, he nonetheless, claims to have been tricked into believing he would earn 12 *annas* a day. He too was quickly placed on a train destined to Suriname before he could collect his thoughts.

Although primary data tends to be of invaluable worth, Hassankham's advises against accepting these sources as absolute truths. One ignores the motivations these two informants might have had when they wrote their accounts. In fact, Sanadhya contradicts himself when he confesses that his sole objection to migrate was the destination to Fiji. According to Hassankham, many migrants who expressed a desire to leave the foreign countries resolved to stay of their own accord. To express the feelings of those relatives left behind, the author relies on letters and lyrics of folksongs that express their sentiments. In Khan's case, the correspondence he received from his estranged relatives express chagrin and melancholia. Khan's father informs him of their impecunious state and begs him to return to India. The tone of Khan's father's last letter expresses his hopelessness and discouragement of never seeing his son again. Another very moving letter was authored by a woman who was left behind with her child. She pleads with her husband to save her and her child from starvation.

The lamentations of the dispirited hearts seeped through their songs, poems and stories and exposed their state of mind. These sorrowful songs reveal their loneliness, feelings of abandonment and yearning for the return of loved ones. Some songs speak about the ruthless treatment migrants suffered as indentured servants, while others disclose the deception of *arkátis*¹ and identify hunger as being the chief motivation for leaving India.

Placed under the subtitle of "Assimilation," Michael F. Toussant's

“Absent Without Leave: East Indians on the Spanish Main in the Nineteenth Century” provides a panoramic view of a scantily researched topic: the emigration of East Indians to Spanish-speaking countries. Toussant believes there seems to have been migratory movement to Venezuela, Cuba, Panama, Honduras, Colombia and Puerto Limón. As Toussant explains, enslaved Africans sought countries that offered freedom to slaves. Pursuant to independence efforts in Colombia, Simón Bolívar, the political leader, decreed emancipation to all those who joined the crusade for independence. Enslaved Africans took advantage of this opportunity and fled to these regions. East Indians, who felt discontent with their positions as indentured servants in the Antilles would soon follow their example. This type of migration to the Main, Toussant calls “leak migrations” due to its illegal and clandestine nature. An additional factor to consider in the migratory activity to the Main was the geographical proximity of the countries. Venezuela is closer to Trinidad than other Caribbean islands, so many abandoned their indentured positions and fled to Venezuela to work. Although the Spanish language was a hindrance for the migrants, it was not a lasting one as they quickly adapted and learned to communicate in the foreign tongue. Plantation owners and overseers complained about missing workers. Absenteeism had become a widespread problem among indentured servants. Many absconded due to the unwholesome treatment they received from the overseers. Others opted to stay on the island and simply hid in different sectors. Toussant notes that following the year 1849, the British failed to keep track of the runaway Indians and did little to force them to comply with their contracts. There are no records of many missing Indians; however, the majority of those who migrated to Venezuela ended up in Capura, Peredenales and Tucupita where they felt safe.

Primnath Gooptar’s “What is in an Indian Diaspora Name? The Caribbean Context” in the chapter on “Plurality of Identities” explores the etymology of personal names and place names which he terms anthroponomastics and toponomastics respectively. Gooptar explains that a person’s name is the first identification marker he/she receives from parents. Yet in some cases East Indians relinquished their given names to adopt more suitable ones perhaps to mingle in the mainstream society or simply to avoid being singled out or discriminated against. By so doing they provided their children with a better chance in the New World. Gooptar points out that some indentured servants were registered with only one name, but others provided two names. When a child was born, it was given a first name and a surname. Names are closely linked to ethnicity; they reveal the person’s race, cultural background, religion, and sociolinguistic status, and thus define their identity. For instance, those who convert to Islam are renamed and given an Islamic

name. He explains that according to Hindu tradition, a secret name is given to children that is known only to close family members and close friends. This name is solely used in Hindi religious ceremonies and is called a *rasi* name. Gooptar provides a list of common Hindu names used in the Anglophone Caribbean. Indian names are generally long and difficult for non-East Indians to pronounce, therefore, some adopt shortened forms such as, Vish for Vishwanatham or Subra for Subramanian. East Indians would give their children Hindu or Muslim names, while those who converted to Christianity chose Christian first names.

Those who migrated to the West selected western names because they opened windows of opportunities to advance socially and /or obtain employment. East Indian family names, Gooptar explains, are influenced by religion and caste and are either Hindu or Muslim. Regarding nicknames, the writer cautions against the name-calling which might offend the person in reference. To exemplify, some of these East Indian nicknames refer to the person's physique, so he or she might be called "fatso or *moti*." The writer adds that some parents insist on calling their grown children by their pet names and in some cases, they are known by this pet name while their proper name may be unfamiliar to friends and acquaintances. Of particular interest is what the author calls the "Douglarization of East Indian names in the Caribbean diaspora." This occurs in different scenarios. To exemplify, the East Indian was compelled to change his or her name and even religion if he/she aspired to get a job in the educational field. Moreover, some East Indian names were written based on their sounds and many suffered shortening of syllables and some lost their suffixes. During the registration of new-born babies, names were also changed by the registrar who might have either misunderstood the pronunciation or preferred to write a variation instead. Some very common variations the author mentions is Muhammed; in Trinidad it is spelled Mohammed, whereas, in Guyana it is known as Mohammaud.

On a different note, Gooptar indicates that subsequent to the advent of Indian movies in the late 1930s parents selected names from the actors in films; this phenomenon he calls "filmi names." Parents chose to honor their favorite actors and actresses by naming their children after them. Other name variations came about as the result of mixed marriages. Parents wanted to please their relatives on both ends, so they gave the child two names; that is, a Christian/ Muslim mix would be *Anthony Ali*. In his final thoughts, Gooptar states that there is some discomfort in the loss and transformation of East Indian ethnic names which have been the cause for ridicule and discrimination that have resulted in the curtailment of opportunities be that of a political or employment nature. He believes a person has the right to retain his or her ethnic name and safeguard his/her ethnic identity.

Hanna Klien brings us to the big screen in her essay “Beyond Bollywood: Alternative Female Subject Positions in the Context of Hindu Film Reception in Trinidad” classified under the subtitle “Social Adaptations and Reproduction.” Klien opens by noting that her work is the product of her Ph.D. research project which focuses on the role of young Trinidadian females in Hindi movies. The groundwork for her study was based on empirical primary data collected in the years 2010-2011. She interviewed three female subjects between the ages of 19 to 26 years-old; all of Indo-Trinidadian descent and belonging to the middle class to gather their ideas about the representation of women in Hindi films. The portrayal of love scenes, kissing and lovemaking in such movies was not as overt as those in western flicks. The compromising scenes in Hindi screens were suggestive rather than explicit; in other words, a kissing scene would be portrayed by couples hiding behind trees. Other intimacies were left to the spectator’s imagination. Hindi films which “reveal too much” tend to be criticized as being too westernized and portraying very little of the Indian culture. Symbolic womanhood, Klien suggests, represents the role models, codes and symbols Hindu women emulated from films dating as far back as the 1930s. These films served as identity markers for women. Thus, symbolic womanhood served as a prototype of feminine deportment and proper etiquette. Klien advises that symbolic womanhood is closely tied to ethnic identity as it is deemed Indian. More recent films that included dysfunctional relationships and illegitimate children as well as premarital sex were censured by Trinidadians for misrepresenting and distorting Indian cultural and ethnic elements and values. She asserts, however, that films of the 90s presented an array of symbols and imagery for symbolic womanhood.

The film the author uses as a sample, *Kabhi Alvida Naa Kehna* (hereafter *KANK*) has contradictory overtones. On the one hand, it remains faithful to established moral canons as there are no kissing scenes, yet on the other hand, its subject matter clashes with Indian values since the storyline includes an adulterous affair. The picture caused mixed feelings of disapproval as well as acceptance in Trinidad. *KANK* breaks with the traditional depiction of motherhood as a devoted wife and mother in Hindi films. Instead the protagonist of the film is a childless woman. In patriarchal societies womanhood is linked to motherhood. A barren woman would not fit the ideal portrait of femininity. Klien’s interviewees all pointed out their desire to become mothers. One of the young women interviewed complained about the taboo subject of sexuality that mothers avoid to discuss with their daughters. She adamantly exclaimed that this subject must be broached with daughters. Another informant protested about the prevailing double standard in Trinidadian society. A woman is made to pay dearly for her indiscretions while the male who is equally

or perhaps more to blame goes unscathed. Trinidad still remains largely sexist. Klien surmises that her three informants challenge the concept of symbolic womanhood that defines the identity of the Indo-Trinidadian woman. Hybridity must be considered in these identity constructions if female role models are to be portrayed legitimately.

To conclude, these interesting proceedings account for the hybridization that has inevitably transformed and formed the identity of the diasporic Indo-Caribbean communities. Although Indo-Caribbean people acknowledge their ties to India, they nonetheless recognize a new identity has originated from the mix of races that resulted from the diaspora. Hassankham provides a complete historical background based on the accounts of indentured servants, folksongs and letters that reveal the state of mind of the migrants as well as the relatives left behind. Tousant covers all angles of the reasons why the indentured servants fled to Spanish countries and specifies the Spanish countries that housed them and that contributed to the Indian diaspora. Goptar offers a thorough analysis of onomastics and their transformations and varieties that resulted from the diasporic phenomenon and Klien presents a clear and holistic portrait of the identity of the hybrid Indo-Trinidadian female.

Note

- ¹ Recruiters.

Alexandra T. Vázquez. 2013. *Listening in Detail: Performances of Cuban Music*. Durham: Duke University Press. 352 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8223-5458-1.

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Opening with the question “what do musicians sound like?” (12), Alexandra Vázquez’s book *Listening in Detail* is itself a literary performance. At times using prose-like sentences, Vázquez relates the intimate experiences by which she gives meaning to music. Using a handful of recorded performances by Cuban musicians for analysis, she unravels unique particulars of their sounds and life histories, which in turn offers an innovative method towards audiovisual observation.

Vázquez builds upon Naomi Schor's *Reading in Detail* (1987) in which Schor traces "the detail" from a theological concept to a post modern aesthetic category. Vázquez insists that the elaborated approach is not meant to translate Schor's work on literature to musical repertoire, but rather to "retell the story from the perspective of the detail" (29). A detail is vaguely defined as anything that does not constitute the dominant narrative. As such, Vázquez places the specific sounds she has selected for analysis into their respective historical contexts and outlines the set of circumstances from which they were derived. Her best example of such is the attention she gives to the mambo-legend Pérez Prado's grunt. It is the inflections, ambiances, refrains, pauses, non-lexical noises, grunts, or breaths, which provide Vázquez catalysts for inquiry. Treated as minutiae data these details can reveal as much, if not more, than the technical descriptions of rhythmic patterns, lyrics, or melodies, which tend to be the leading narratives of musical scholarship. In this manner, Vázquez presents readers to "an experience with," rather than "an account of," Cuban music (38).

The book's first chapter, "Performing Anthology," offers a detailed listening of Alfredo Rodríguez's 1996 compilation album titled *Cuba Linda*. Vázquez argues that the anthology by Rodríguez defies the racial profiling of many musical compilations that try to make Cuba exotic, *Buena Vista Social Club* being the more famous and most "fatigued example" (10). In her engagement of Rodríguez's *Cuba Linda*, Vázquez offers an analysis of Cuban and American jazz as an intertwined trend between the post-colonial cities of Havana and New Orleans. Within this geographical musical framework, she situates African American and Afro-Cuban cultural production as a result of their shared aesthetics, providing ample examples in literature and musical repertoires. By describing and observing each song in Rodríguez's anthology she exemplifies the technique of listening in detail and illustrates what such particulars can be, what they offer for analysis, and the possible ways to extrapolate narratives from them.

The second chapter, "*Una Escuela Rara: The Graciela School*," jumps from an analysis of Rodríguez's anthology to Vázquez's examination of oral history interviews with "the first lady of Latin jazz," Graciela Pérez. A few of the interviews with Graciela are her own, but the center piece of her analysis is derived from an audio recording conducted by René López and Raúl Fernández obtained at the National Museum of American History. Vázquez listens, and subsequently writes, in detail, about Pérez's nuances, her tones, her treatment of the interviewers, all of which she extrapolates to tell a larger narrative about Pérez's character and biography. Vázquez additionally shares a few glimpses into her own engagements with Graciela which serve to add biographical perspective

and convince us of the conclusions she draws from her detailed listening. This chapter also includes a historical overview of the all-female Cuban Anacaona Orchestra, regarded as a pioneering entity for women in Cuban music during the 1930s, of which Graciela Pérez was a member (93-102).

The unequivocal grunt of mambo musician Pérez Prado becomes the center point of the third chapter, "Itinerant Outbursts." Vázquez's emphasis is not on what the grunt is saying, but rather what it is doing. In Vázquez's own words, she seeks to discover its "performative life" (133). Through her analysis of the grunt, she narrates the subtleties of Prado's musical career from Cuba to Mexico City and California, as well as through the southern United States under Jim Crow laws which enforced racial segregation. Vázquez takes advantage of the narrative Prado's grunt provides her to relay a brief history of the mambo, and share some theories of how "mambo entered sound, song and conversation" (142-147). I found particular enjoyment in Vázquez's identification and assessment of how Prado's notorious grunt found its way into classic American literature, such as Jack Kerouac's 1957 classic novel, *On the Road*. Linking together these types of seemingly arbitrary details becomes the exemplary road-map to Vázquez's *Listening in Detail*.

"Visual Arrangements, Sonic Impressions" transcends Vázquez's analysis from audio to visual in her examination of two 1960s post-revolutionary films about music made by the Cuban Institute for Cinematographic Art and Industry (ICAIC). Signaling out film as a musical medium, she dissects Rogelio Paris' (1963) film *Nosotros la música* (We, the Music), and the documentary *Y...tenemos sabor* (And...we have flavor), directed by Sara Gómez (1967). She selects these Cuban films, the first focused on dance, the second on Afro-Cuban music, as examples of productions that received particular nationalist attention at the triumph of the revolution. This is particularly true since the musical and cinematographic arts were often conduits of pedagogical influence (181). Alongside her cultural analysis, Vázquez explains how "cameras were vitally necessary to record the revolution as it happened, its unexpected and unprecedented successes and failures" (178). Understood as a socio-political positioning of the media, Vázquez provides a brief historical account of post-revolutionary Cuba and U.S. relations. Her overview however, seems fixed in time. Although she situates the two films in the framework of their making, she falls short in providing an account for the time and context of her viewing of them decades later.

Vázquez's closing chapter, "Cold War Kids in Concert," places our journey through the first four chapters of *Listening in Detail* into perspective. It is in this closure that Vázquez provides readers with intricate details of her own biographical story. She brings to the forefront her

father's journey as a child immigrant at the time of Operation Peter Pan. The U.S. government program relocated unaccompanied minors to the United States from Cuba so as to "save" them from communism at the onset of the revolution. For the most part, immigrant children experienced their exodus as an individual traumatic rupture between themselves and their parents and were not conscious of participating in a larger historical and political event. In a parallel manner, Vázquez presents her experience of familial trauma and separation through her father's story as the oedipal motivation for her book. She states, "I want to make them [those like her father] better; to remind them that music keeps locations and relationships alive and present even if they seem not to be. It is the why of listening in detail" (218). Vázquez identifies similar experiences of childhood shaped by the cold war on Koreans and Vietnamese in the United States, whom she explains engage in an unarticulated camaraderie with Cuban-Americans (213). Her discussion of the post-cold war generational solidarity includes a valuable discussion and critique of "Cuban exceptionalism" which is not commonly addressed by scholars (208-209).

Listening in Detail's closing chapter offers a recount of the historic 1999 concert in Miami by Cuba's most popular band, Los Van Van, which was met with protests. Vázquez uses this event to bring to the forefront the political divisions between older and younger Cuban-Americans, the latter referred to as "cold-war kids" (222-228). She compares this event to the Peace without Borders concert by pop-singer Juanes, a decade later in Havana (230-234). In contrast to Los Van Van, this concert was defended by larger numbers of Miami Cubans. Vázquez concludes with a detailed listening of the Cuban rock singer X Alfonso's multigenerational performance at the Juanes concert, in which audiences were invited to transcend political points of view, and "get down together" (234).

Through her writing style and by extrapolating historical details, Vázquez brings the media archives to life. Her prose and detailed descriptions allow readers to forget that her analysis stems from watching images, hearing songs, and listening to recorded interviews. Her interpretive approach rests on thick description (Geertz 1973), yet she avoids any anthropological reference to such observational techniques. Additionally, an analysis of the archives provides a safe place for observation, which is where I would have appreciated a discussion about listening in detail at a live performance. The book would also merit from a greater assessment of the media itself as a conduit of data for analysis.

Listening in Detail is a valuable addition to Cuban studies and musicology, as well as ethnomusicology, performance studies, and Caribbean studies. The book offers excellent points of discussion for further inquiry

in the arenas of observational research methods for anthropology, media and cultural studies which could formalize Vázquez's unique analytic approach.

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Michael J. Jarvis. 2010. *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press. 684 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8078-3321-6.

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Jarvis' *In the Eye of All trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* aims to present Bermuda's unique history from a distinctly maritime perspective, and in so doing stress the importance of Bermuda's role in the emerging international relations of the early colonial Atlantic. Jarvis not only succeeds in presenting a compelling chronological history of Bermuda and Bermudians, but also relocates the island physically and ideologically at the heart of Colonial and Atlantic Studies.

Jarvis describes his book as "a maritime social history" (p. 6) located at the intersection of Atlantic studies, local and maritime history. It contributes to an increasing body of historical scholarship based on interdisciplinary research. In fact, one of the many strengths of the book relates to the author's own physical and academic journey of discovery that started with an archeological excavation in Bermuda and moved him around various American, Caribbean and European regions and

disciplines where he paid careful attention to how those regions were connected in ways that national narratives often obscure or erase altogether. The result is a book that exceeds academic standards of scholarship. After completing it, a reader can appreciate just how important Bermuda, and more importantly, Bermudians were in the ideological and political shaping of emerging New World economies and international relations.

In an extremely effective introduction, the author chooses to foreground Eaton's map of the Atlantic that orients the landmass of South America to the left and North America to the right, placing Bermuda as the Atlantic gatekeeper between the European known-world and the trading hubs of the Caribbean and Americas (p. 3). It makes the author's intentions clear; he plans to disorient his readers. The following seven sizable chapters then compel his readers to reinterpret what they think they know about Atlantic history by placing Bermuda at the centre of trans-Atlantic activity. Chapter 1 starts with the discovery of the uninhabited island in 1505 and the subsequent chapters are organized by chronological sequence starting with colonization, and moving from the beginnings of sustained maritime activity into a period of flourishing maritime economy with a focus on seafaring people and the migration and trade patterns that connected them, and finally closing with chapters dedicated to the Bermudian response to political change during the American Revolution and the consequent decline of the island's maritime activity. An engaging epilogue brings the history up to 1830 and the conclusion stresses the author's intention to present the complexities of the lives and determination of "largely anonymous individuals [who] shaped colonial expansion" (p. 459).

The author, with his endearing tone of quiet authority, recognizes the considerable historical achievements of Bermudian forefathers, but also stresses the many untold stories of hardship, manipulation and anxiety that poor Bermudian men, women and children experienced. He furthermore, acknowledges "the untellable tales of the many who died" (p. 347). Jarvis skillfully reminds a reader throughout the book that Bermudian families comprise more than the male figurehead that census records and colonial documents care to acknowledge. The family network, Jarvis explains, was absolutely central to social and international cohesion. Young children were employed in menial but critical tasks relating to local communication, domestic work, farming and construction. Older daughters and sons migrated and married to strengthen trade networks and build for increased capacity. Enslaved men became masters of navigation and commerce as a result of the work they did as crew-members in trading, whaling, privateering, and wreck-diving voyages in addition to skills they gained in carpentry and technology through

their role in local construction of the famous Bermuda sloops. Enslaved women performed work essential to local agriculture and helped to foment a strong barter economy that reduced reliance on food imports and the British currency in critical times of need and political tension. Young Bermudians, both men and women, enslaved and free, dedicated themselves to the laborious process of salt raking, tree felling, and local defense. Wives and widows ran the home, frequently making household decisions about land use, and forming the majority of island residents who were knowledgeable about, and influential in local politics. Women also contributed to the local economy through the manufacture of woven products and the purchase of household goods. Jarvis explains how all these people, working together with a clan-like loyalty in times of plenty and times of hardship, created Bermuda's unique local identity and carved its fundamental place in the history of the New World.

Jarvis writes with a flair for metaphor, for example: comparing the vast tangle of interdependent family networks to the complex and interconnected branches of the mangrove; comparing the fast-paced and often invisible trade of the small Bermuda vessels to the small fish that evade the colonial nets of legislation and documentation; and comparing the cedar tree to a savings account that is planted at the birth to mature in 30 years and build the ships for the next generation yet is also liable to be 'mortgaged' in times of hardship. The title of the book itself refers to the metaphor of Bermuda in the eye of a political, geographical, and ideological storm as the Atlantic colonial world takes shape around the tiny island. And the island itself becomes a sea-vessel in which "Bermudians survived by carefully reading the winds of war and tacking at critical historical moments" (p. 438) in a chapter that stresses this metaphor, entitled *Navigating the American Revolution*. The author's flair for figurative language is one of the reasons how this lengthy and detail-rich text, with 176 pages of endnotes, maintains a muscular narrative style that compels a reader throughout.

In addition to its narrative flair, well-selected and very specific details of certain events and people bring the human history to life. For example, the author explains how, unlike common practice in other colonies, Bermudan families were racially integrated and young people identified themselves with the island rather than their European or African origins. This is illustrated by the example of how Ben, an enslaved caulker, Jack, an enslaved pilot, and an unnamed slave woman escaped a master that had moved them to South Carolina; but instead of making for African shores, or even maroon communities in the American or Caribbean, they returned home to Bermuda and almost certain re-enslavement. In a later chapter, the author creates suspense and drama with the description of the 1775 gunpowder theft in support of American rebels that happened

under the nose of the sleeping governor as three vessels converged on the island. Jarvis explains how this event perpetuated Bermudian's reputation as "dubiously loyal subjects" (p. 408) and motivated a return to tighter British rule after an earlier period of autonomy that had been celebrated for nearly a century after the Somers Company was dissolved in 1684. The irony of the return to British rule that this event motivated is not lost on the author who encourages his intelligent reader to compare Bermudan history with the parallel histories of the American colonies and how reflect on how this particular event may have helped them win their independence. These two examples illustrate the author's ability to craft historical commentary not from dates, events or national narratives but from the messy reality of human experience.

The book's organization in chronological sequence makes logical sense in terms of its historical purpose, yet there are such compelling themes that are fragmented by the need to relate facts in date order that the book might frustrate a reader whose main interest is not date-dependent. For example, information relating to architecture, palmetto weaving, the salt trade, agriculture, felling and maritime technology is rich and complete, but only for the reader who dedicates time to reading the entire book, a luxury not always available for scholars seeking secondary material. For this reason, I believe the book to be more suited to readers interested primarily in local or regional history and who can dedicate time to the depth of detail that each chronological chapter provides. Those scholars of history whose research concentrates on specific date ranges will additionally appreciate the dedicated chapters on initial colonization, the early and developing economies, and the American Revolution. In short, Jarvis's *In the Eye of All Trade: Bermuda, Bermudians, and the Maritime Atlantic World, 1680-1783* is a powerhouse of historical scholarship yet also a fascinating human story of one small island's past and all the people who made it Bermuda.

Jason Frydman. 2014. *Sounding the Break: African American and Caribbean Routes of World Literature*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. ISBN: 978-0-8139-3573-7. Pp. i- viii; 1-184.

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Jason Frydman's *Sounding the Break African American and Caribbean Routes of World Literature* is a fresh intervention in the often absolutist Eurocentric genealogy of world literature grafted on the classical periods in Greece and Rome. He questions absence of pre-Greco-Roman civilizations of Africa from which these classical Greco-Roman civilizations, were offshoots. Citing the arguments of African diaspora philosophers such as Samuel R. Delany, W.E.B. Du Bois, among others, Frydman advances an alternative reading of the evolution, growth and spread of world literature from palimpsestic, rhizomatic, and symbiotic perspectives. For Delany, Frydman surmises, the development and use of scriptural letters as a popular practice began in Ethiopia, and spread to Egypt where it was monopolized by the priestly and royal classes. The Greeks then borrowed this from the Egyptians, secularized it and further developed it into what today is considered Greek classical literature. Rome, according to this linearity of movement, corrupted even what the Greeks secularized which enabled it to travel globally more efficiently throughout the Roman Empire. W.E.B. Du Bois, questions this point of view and rejects it as limiting and imposes a philosophy of palimpsestic interpretation of the history of philosophy of civilization. This method, he insists, opens up liminal spaces through which African American experiences as articulated in polyrhythmic representations of their cultural narratives can be inserted. Frydman claims that Du Bois' idea of the "palimpsestic hermeneutics of antiquity" (19), that is, in its versatility and mobility, offsets the linear percolation theory of ideas advocated and becomes a point of departure for his reading of the works of Zora Neale Hurston, Alejo Carpentier, Derek Walcott, Maryse Condé and Toni Morrison. It enables him to see these writers as practitioners of counter-discursive textualities that require anti-positivists reading protocols. Argued this way, Frydman is able to assert unequivocally the place of African diaspora writing as global.

Frydman advances nuanced arguments to prove Zora Neale

Hurston's work as fully "world literature," based on what he translates as her "accessible mappings of African diasporic vernacular culture" (91). He tangentially posits that unlike Du Bois, Langston Hughes, Claude MacKay, and others of the Harlem Renaissance, whose works he claims are appendages of Asian and European cultural centers, Hurston's work reveals a cosmopolitanism rooted firmly in African diaspora transnational and transcultural indeterminacy, but nonetheless unified through their vernacular aesthetic. Frydman's position is founded on his belief that Hurston's anthropological, ethnographic, epistolary, and critical biographical discourses confound any attempt to pigeon-hole her work, thus elevating her into the role of a global cosmopolitan woman of letters without jeopardizing her vernacular African diasporicity which often juggle the oral and the scribal together.

In discussing Alejo Carpentier's work, Frydman agonizes over the appropriation, sensationalization, exoticization, and essentialization of African diaspora struggles and cosmogonies to create a white-Caribbean creole's combative repudiation of Euro-Cuban cultural and literary imperialism that emphasized a whiteness as the normative. But as Frydman shows, white creole writers in their honest attempts to honor African Caribbean cultural survivals, end up misrepresenting them as antithetical to established Euro-American cultural racism, and consequently parade only the superficial, disembodied, and spectrally Faustian performances, erroneously believing they have understood African diaspora cultures. Their agenda of using African diaspora cultures to invigorate a tired white Latin-American literature became known as marvelous realism, the precursor to magical realism. Essentially, Frydman's position suggests that much as Carpentier and others like him such as Jacques Roumain, Nicolás Guillén, and Luis Palés Matos unwittingly consolidate the stereotyping of African diaspora cultures as limited to the mere spectacle: music, dance, and spirituality which they personify as a rejection of European cultural imperialism.

The empathic critique of Carpentier moves to Derek Walcott's confrontation with what Frydman terms as the worn-out critical categories that often follow the reception of Walcott's work. Frydman therefore argues for a recognition of Walcott's indeterminate positionality that resists any unitary or simple dualistic reading perspectives. The majority of this chapter focuses on Walcott's rejection of the call to emblemize the African Caribbean peasant as the icon of cultural retention and authenticity, much as the white *jíbaro* is now consolidated as the authentic representation of culture in Hispanic Caribbean islands. Walcott, he argues passionately, avoids the commodified implications of "broadcasting local culture through literary form, [which] can too easily liquidate that culture into a cast of transferable fetish objects, emblems,

and epithets—souvenirs.” (90) But the downside of Walcott’s position is that he becomes emblemized as a “postethnic, globalized, cosmopolitan, trans-postcolonial individual” (90). Walcott is de-nativized, erasing from his work the nuances of African Caribbean historical and cultural specificity and consciousness. Frydman subsequently then canvasses for a reading hermeneutic that would see Walcott operating “as an individual node in a non-teleological recirculatory verbal network of textuality and performance” to craft a pan-Caribbean aesthetic that is cognizant of all the other cultural influences that make up than pan-Caribbean identity.

If Walcott’s forays into European literary styles is problematic to his readers, Frydman’s reading of Maryse Condé’s reveals how she constantly combats African diaspora drives to promote a form of genealogical monogenesis as the only authentic narrative mode of representation of African cultural retentions in the diaspora. He cites Condé’s personal sojourns in West Africa, her emotional involvement through marriage for some time to an African, and her literary immersion through revisionary historicism. Frydman states that Condé is aware that for African Caribbean people with mis-recorded genealogical roots, the assemblage of disparate narrative snapshots to create a narrative that sounds valid is underscored by “. . . improvisatory, open-ended possibilities for resignifying genealogical traces and networks” best suited for genealogy invention. Frydman argues that global cultural market forces compel Condé’s style and vision, even as much as Condé’s understanding that African Caribbean genealogical tracing is not a bloodline gift, but a participatory and celebrative staging of collective narrative and lived experiences. In this process, Condé engages African Caribbean histories of miseducation, to stage narratives of “misdirection and disorientation (100) to signify on both Africa-centered narrative orality (griot tradition) and the “hegemony of European literary forms and market” (100). Deviating from Walcott’s style of appealing to only European and Asian forms, Condé combines European literary sensationalism, West African griot performance styles, archival documentation, military records, and travelogues to mimic and signify on both African and European forms. This enables her to establish a Caribbean canon that both mimics and simultaneously resists Africa and Europe.

Any book on African diaspora literary cosmopolitanism and global outreach must address the role of Toni Morrison. Thus, Frydman’s text, which starts with the pioneering Zora Neale Hurston, ends at her literary daughter. The book reads like a critical genealogy of literary matrilineage. To wit, Frydman uses certain recurring phrases such as the “vernacular as a site of global” cosmopolitanism, to describe both authors and their work. Both writers he argues, reject the use of African American vernacular merely as “authenticating local marker[s]” which is

being advocated by African diaspora cultural and race nationalists that rose from the negritude/negrismo/Black Power/Creolité movements. Morrison, stipulates Frydman, resisted this call as inimical to her project of constructing a more expansive rhetoric of recovery that would enable African diaspora populations to trace their “discursive relations scattered across space and time, worldly relations congealed within and indexed by the vernacular” (119). Moreover, Frydman’s reading of Morrison seems to contemplate on her role as the compassionate griot that sings to heal her peoples. She artfully combines African American oral narrative strategies with the scribal, and like Hurston, creates “speak-erly” texts. In addition, Frydman sees a similarity with Walcott in the way Morrison also parodies Nordic oral and circum-Mediterranean scribal discursivity as anti-chiasmus reading praxes which helps to localize them within African American cultural traditions.

Frydman echoes Glissant’s appropriation of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s theory of the rhizome for his reading of Morrison. However, this theory of reading is applicable to all the writers studied in this work. Frydman has produced a well-researched book with strong and well supported arguments. His style is lucid and his points clearly stated and defended. I find this book refreshing to read and it certainly opens up new ways of seeing these writers that disturb the often binary or essentialist approaches one encounters in the critical approaches to these writers’ works. I find the almost historical ordering of the critical engagement with these authors interesting, though not linear, yet there is sense of linearity in the way the text starts with a recapitulation of the historical beginnings of the debates to how they create their own poetics of relations that Edouard Glissant’s argues for in his book *The Poetics of Relations*. This is a work that should be on all shelves of all university libraries where research on world literature or literature and globalization exist. It fits into pan-African literature courses. The book’s merit also comes from its inclusionary dynamic; all sexes, races, and major linguistic groups in the Americas are represented. Frydman’s passionate critical awareness of the difficulties each of these writers have had to deal with in the face of overwhelming forces to conform to global demands for commodified cultural products gives him a balanced appreciation of the work. We need more of such critical engagements with African diaspora texts that refuse to pander to the cultural bibbers and nationalist’s demands.